



Projected openings in occupations that require a college degree

Elka Torpey | September 2021

Which college-level occupations are expected to have many openings in the coming years? What types of career fields are they in? And how much do they pay? Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) answer these questions.

Each year, BLS projects employment and openings for hundreds of occupations. As part of its analysis, BLS determines the education and experience typically needed for people entering an occupation, along with any postentry training required to attain competency.

About half of the occupations analyzed by BLS typically require some type of college degree: associate's, bachelor's, master's, or doctoral or professional. The occupations cover a range of career fields, including

- [Business, management, and sales](#)

- [Computer and engineering](#)
- [Education, social service, and legal](#)
- [Healthcare](#)
- [Media, arts, and sports](#)

Keep reading to see projections and wage data for selected college-level occupations in each of these career fields. Tables show the degree that is typically required, along with 2020 median annual wages and the number of openings projected each year from 2020 to 2030. (A median wage is the wage at which half of workers in the occupation earned more than that amount, and half earned less. These wage data exclude self-employed workers.)

Compare the wages in the tables with the median annual wage for all occupations in 2020 (\$41,950) and with the median wages for occupations at the associate's (\$55,870), bachelor's (\$78,020), master's (\$76,800), and doctoral or professional (\$110,160) degree levels.

Most of the projected openings in these occupations stem from the need to replace workers who leave permanently, such as for retirement. But some openings are expected to result from newly created jobs.

Business, management, and sales

Workers in [business](#), [management](#), and [sales](#) occupations help organizations operate, oversee people or money, or promote products and services. Among the occupations in table 1, [general and operations managers](#) is projected to have the most openings each year, on average, from 2020 to 2030.

Table 1. Business, management, and sales
Occupations projected to have the most openings each year, on average, 2020–30



Occupation	Occupational openings, projected 2020–30 annual average	Median annual wage, 2020	Degree typically required for entry
General and operations managers	229,600	\$103,650	Bachelor's
Accountants and auditors	135,000	73,560	Bachelor's
Management analysts	99,400	87,660	Bachelor's
Market research analysts and marketing specialists	96,000	65,810	Bachelor's
Human resources specialists	73,400	63,490	Bachelor's
Financial managers	64,200	134,180	Bachelor's
Medical and health services managers	51,800	104,280	Bachelor's
Securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents	42,500	64,770	Bachelor's
Computer and information systems managers	42,400	151,150	Bachelor's
Financial and investment analysts, financial risk specialists, and financial specialists, all other	41,000	83,660	Bachelor's

Note: Work experience in a related occupation is typically required for general and operations managers; management analysts; financial managers; medical and health services managers; and computer and information systems managers. On-the-job training is typically required for securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections.


All the occupations in table 1 typically require a bachelor's degree for entry. Managers and [management analysts](#) also need work experience in a related occupation. [Securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents](#) typically receive on-the-job training after being hired, which may include preparation for the exams required to sell investment products and services.

Computer and engineering

Workers in [computer](#) and [engineering](#) occupations use technical knowledge to solve problems and to develop products and systems. Of the occupations in table 2, [software developers and software quality assurance analysts and testers](#) is expected to have the most openings each year, on average, from 2020 to 2030.

Table 2. Computer and engineering

Occupations projected to have the most openings each year, on average, 2020–30



Occupation	Occupational openings, projected 2020–30 annual average	Median annual wage, 2020	Degree typically required for entry
Software developers and software quality assurance analysts and testers	189,200	\$110,140	Bachelor's
Computer systems analysts	47,500	93,730	Bachelor's
Civil engineers	25,000	88,570	Bachelor's
Network and computer systems administrators	24,900	84,810	Bachelor's
Industrial engineers	23,300	88,950	Bachelor's
Mechanical engineers	20,200	90,160	Bachelor's
Web developers and digital interface designers	17,900	77,200	Bachelor's
Information security analysts	16,300	103,590	Bachelor's
Computer network support specialists	15,500	65,450	Associate's
Database administrators and architects	13,900	98,860	Bachelor's

Note: Work experience in a related occupation is typically required for information security analysts.


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections.

A bachelor's degree is typically required for all of the occupations in table 2, except for [computer network support specialists](#); workers in this occupation typically need an associate's degree. [Information security analysts](#) often need experience in a related occupation. Employers may require information technology (IT) workers to have certifications related to the products they use.

Education, social service, and legal

[Education](#), [social service](#), and [legal](#) jobs involve helping people to learn, improve their lives, or resolve problems. Of the occupations in table 3, [elementary school teachers](#) is projected to have the most openings annually, on average, from 2020 to 2030.

Table 3. Education, social service, and legal
Occupations projected to have the most openings each year, on average, 2020–30



Occupation	Occupational openings, projected 2020–30 annual average	Median annual wage, 2020	Degree typically required for entry
Elementary school teachers, except special education	110,800	\$60,940	Bachelor's
Secondary school teachers, except special and career/technical education	77,400	62,870	Bachelor's
Preschool teachers, except special education	59,600	31,930	Associate's
Middle school teachers, except special and career/technical education	48,400	60,810	Bachelor's
Lawyers	46,000	126,930	Doctoral or professional
Paralegals and legal assistants	43,000	52,920	Associate's
Substance abuse, behavioral disorder, and mental health counselors	41,000	47,660	Bachelor's
Child, family, and school social workers	36,700	48,430	Bachelor's
Educational, guidance, and career counselors and advisors	35,000	58,120	Master's
Health specialties teachers, postsecondary	30,800	99,090	Doctoral or professional

Note: Work experience in a related occupation is typically required for health specialties teachers, postsecondary.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections.

Education assignments for the occupations in table 3 range from an associate's degree for [preschool teachers](#) and [paralegals](#) to a doctoral or professional degree for [postsecondary health specialties teachers](#) and [lawyers](#). K-12

teachers, [counselors](#), and [social workers](#) typically need a bachelor's or master's degree for entry. Most of these occupations also require licensure or certification.

Healthcare

[Healthcare](#) workers help people get or stay well. The number of projected openings for [registered nurses](#)—nearly 200,000 each year, on average, from 2020 to 2030—far surpasses those in the other occupations in table 4.

Table 4. Healthcare
Occupations projected to have the most openings each year, on average, 2020–30



Occupation	Occupational openings, projected 2020–30 annual average	Median annual wage, 2020	Degree typically required for entry
Registered nurses	194,500	\$75,330	Bachelor's
Nurse practitioners	26,000	111,680	Master's
Clinical laboratory technologists and technicians	25,900	54,180	Bachelor's
Physicians and surgeons	22,700	>=208,000	Doctoral or professional
Radiologic technologists and technicians	17,400	61,900	Associate's
Physical therapist assistants	16,400	59,770	Associate's
Physical therapists	15,600	91,010	Doctoral or professional
Dental hygienists	15,600	77,090	Associate's
Speech-language pathologists	15,200	80,480	Master's
Physician assistants	12,200	115,390	Master's


Note: An internship or residency is typically required for physicians and surgeons and speech-language pathologists.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections.

Table 4 has relatively few bachelor's-level occupations. [Dental hygienists](#), [physical therapist assistants](#), and [radiologic technologists](#) typically need an associate's degree. [Nurse practitioners](#), [speech-language pathologists](#), and [physician assistants](#) typically need a master's degree, and [physicians and surgeons](#) and [physical therapists](#) typically need a doctoral or professional degree. Most workers in these occupations must be licensed, and some also must complete an internship or residency.

Media, arts, and sports

[Media](#), [arts](#), and [sports](#) workers focus primarily on informing or entertaining. Of the occupations in table 5, [coaches and scouts](#) is projected to have the most openings per year, on average, from 2020 to 2030.

Table 5. Media, arts, and sports Occupations projected to have the most openings each year, on average, 2020–30			
			
Occupation	Occupational openings, projected 2020–30 annual average	Median annual wage, 2020	Degree typically required for entry
Coaches and scouts	45,100	\$36,330	Bachelor's
Public relations specialists	29,200	62,810	Bachelor's
Graphic designers	23,900	53,380	Bachelor's
Producers and directors	15,600	76,400	Bachelor's
Writers and authors	15,400	67,120	Bachelor's
Art directors	11,500	97,270	Bachelor's
Editors	11,200	63,400	Bachelor's
Interpreters and translators	10,400	52,330	Bachelor's
Special effects artists and animators	7,800	77,700	Bachelor's
Interior designers	7,800	57,060	Bachelor's

Note: Work experience in a related occupation is typically required for producers and directors, art directors, and editors. On-the-job training is typically required for writers and authors.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections.

The occupations in table 5 all typically require a bachelor's degree. Work experience in a related occupation is usually important for several of these occupations, including [producers and directors](#), [editors](#), and [art directors](#).

Internships, portfolios, or other ways to show proficiency often are helpful for getting a job in these fields. Some occupations have licensing or other requirements.

For more information

Learn more about what's required to enter the occupations highlighted in this article, as well as hundreds of others, in the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) (OOH). For example, the How to Become One section of the OOH often describes [fields of degree](#), alternative paths for entering an occupation, or other steps in preparing for a career, such as completing an internship or earning a license or certification.

A full list of occupational projections that includes wages and the BLS education and training assignments is available from the [Employment Projections](#) program. Read more about the BLS assignments on the [education and training data](#) page.

BLS education assignments are based on analyses of the academic preparation that workers typically need to enter an occupation. However, the education that workers in an occupation have attained may vary. See [American Community Survey data](#) for breakdowns of educational attainment by detailed occupation.

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